

# Health Policy

## NEWSLETTER

## Health Policy Forums

### Achieving Cultural Competency: Using a Case-Based Approach for Teaching and Learning

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Many health care encounters are challenged by cultural misunderstandings and lack of self-awareness. These breakdowns can profoundly affect the way in which care is delivered. Dr. Lisa Hark and Dr. Horace De Lisser, editors of the newly released book, *Achieving Cultural Competency: Using a Case-Based Approach for Teaching and Learning*, presented on these issues and offered strategies for improving the cross-cultural clinical encounter. Their work is focused on developing educational tools and integrating cultural competency into medical school curriculum.

Dr. De Lisser offered an overview and definition of cultural competency. He also described the process of cultural competency which includes self-awareness, communication and negotiation skills, knowledge of cultural norms, and knowledge of health-related disparities. He urged the audience to think about diversity and culture in the broadest dimensions such as religion/spirituality, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Dr. Hark described the process for the development of research and case studies that were eventually

used to teach students and residents. Using real-life scenarios, they established concrete examples, and included a number of vignettes and process questions that could be accessed online as a CME program. Dr. Hark and Dr. De Lisser presented some of these cases at the Health Policy Forum which led to a lively, thought-provoking audience discussion.

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**For an example of an online CME cultural competency course created by the presenters, visit: <http://cme-online.med.upenn.edu/index.pl?id=452455>.**